MN 10 — MN 10 The Establishing of Mindfulness Discourse | Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Text

The Establishing of Mindfulness Discourse

Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (MN 10)

Introduction

Satipaṭṭhāna—the establishing (upaṭṭhāna) of mindfulness (sati)—is a meditative technique for training the mind to keep mindfulness firmly established in a particular frame of reference in all its activities. The term sati is related to the verb sarati, to remember or to keep in mind. It is sometimes translated as non-reactive awareness, free from agendas, simply present with whatever arises, but the formula for satipaṭṭhāna doesn’t support that translation. Non-reactive awareness is actually an aspect of

equanimity, one of the mental qualities fostered in the course of satipaṭṭhāna. The activity of satipaṭṭhāna, however, definitely has a motivating agenda: the desire for awakening, which is classed not as a cause of suffering, but as part of the path to its ending (see SN 51:15). The role of mindfulness is to keep the mind properly focused in frames of reference that will give it guidance in what present events to develop, and which ones to abandon, so as to keep it on the path. To make an analogy, awakening is like a mountain on the horizon, the destination to which you are driving a car. Mindfulness is what remembers to keep attention focused on the road to the mountain, rather than letting it stay focused on glimpses of the mountain or get distracted by other paths leading away from the road.

Satipaṭṭhāna plays a role in many formulations of the path to awakening. In the noble eightfold path, it is the seventh factor, following on right effort and leading to right concentration. In the five strengths and five faculties, it is the third factor, following on persistence and leading to concentration. In the seven factors for awakening, it is the first factor, providing a foundation for the remaining six factors: analysis of qualities, persistence, rapture, calm, concentration, and equanimity.

The following sutta contains the longest treatment of satipaṭṭhāna found in the Canon. However, despite its length, its treatment of the topic is far from complete. This partly has to do with the nature of the topic itself. As the Buddha states in MN 12:

“Sāriputta, suppose that I had four disciples with a 100-year life span, living for 100 years, and endowed with excellent mindfulness, retention, recall, & keenness of discernment. Just as an archer with a good bow—trained, dexterous, & practiced—could easily shoot a light arrow across the shadow of a palmyra tree, they—endowed with that great an extent of mindfulness, that great an extent of retention, that great an extent of recall, & that keenness of discernment—would ask me one question after another on the four establishings of mindfulness. And I, asked again & again, would answer. Answered, they would remember what I had answered, and they wouldn’t counter-question me about it a second time more. Aside from eating, drinking, chewing, & savoring, aside from urinating & defecating, aside from relieving sleepiness & weariness, there would be no ending of the Tathāgata’s Dhamma teaching, there would be no ending of the Tathāgata’s phrasing of Dhamma statements, there would be no ending of the Tathāgata’s quick-wittedness (in answering) questions; but those four disciples of mine, with their 100-year life span, living for 100 years, would die with the passing of 100 years.”

Although the main thrust of this passage concerns the extent of the Buddha’s knowledge, it also makes an important statement about how vast the topic of satipaṭṭhāna is: Even with one hundred years of questioning, you couldn’t exhaust it.

The fact that DN 22’s treatment of the satipaṭṭhāna is incomplete is also apparent from the organization of the sutta: The Buddha starts with a statement of the standard short formula for satipaṭṭhāna: “There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings… mind… mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the

world." However, the questions posed and answered in the course of the sutta explain and expand on only part of the formula: what it means to "remained focused" on each of the frames of reference in & of itself. Among other things, there is no discussion of how ardency functions in the practice, of what it means to subdue greed and distress with reference to the world, of how the various frames of reference interact in practice, nor of what the stages in the practice are. For this information, we have to look at other treatments of these topics found elsewhere in the Canon.

For instance, MN 118 makes the important point that focusing on the breath can bring all four frames of reference into play simultaneously. In other words, the body in & of itself is the main frame of reference, and the remaining three build on it. SN 47:40 mentions two stages in the practice—the establishing of mindfulness and the development of the establishing of mindfulness—adding that the second stage is accomplished by developing all eight factors of the noble eightfold path. Among other things, this means that not only does the establishing of mindfulness provide a foundation for right concentration—the four jhānas—but the mastery of the four jhānas also helps to develop the establishing of mindfulness even further.

When we compare SN 47:40 with one of the refrains in DN 22, we find three stages in satipaṭṭhāna practice.

The first stage, as applied to the body, is this:

The monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, and mindful—subduing greed and distress with reference to the world.

The three qualities at the center of this formula are also central to the practice of satipaṭṭhāna. SN 16:2 shows that ardency is directly related to the practice of right effort. Thus mindfulness keeps the proper frame of reference in mind, alertness watches events related to that frame of reference, and these two qualities together give guidance to ardency so that it can, in line with right effort, abandon things that need to be abandoned, and to develop those that need to be developed.

Although satipaṭṭhāna practice is often said to be separate from the practice of jhāna, a number of suttas—such as MN 125 and AN 8:70—equate the successful completion of this first stage with the attainment of the first level of jhāna. This point is confirmed by the many suttas—MN 118 among them—describing how the practice of satipaṭṭhāna brings to completion the factors for awakening, which coincide with the factors of jhāna.

The second stage of satipaṭṭhāna practice—the development of satipaṭṭhāna—is this:

One remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the body, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the body, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to the body.

The word “origination,” here, does not mean that one is focused simply on the arising of phenomena. Instead, it means being focused on how phenomena arise in connection with causes. The “phenomenon of origination and passing away” covers events either directly or indirectly related to one’s chosen frame of reference. “Directly” means changes in the frame of reference itself. For instance, when focused on the body, one may notice what causes breath sensations to arise and pass away within it. “Indirectly,” here, means events in any of the other three frames of reference as they relate to the body. For example, one might notice what causes feelings of pleasure or mental states of irritation to arise and pass away in connection to events in the body. Or one might notice lapses of mindfulness in one’s focus on the body.

Of course, to see causal relations requires that the meditator consciously try to effect changes in events, to see which events actually have a causal relationship to one another and which ones don’t. Here again, ardency in the practice of right effort and right concentration is what allows for this sort of understanding to arise.

In every case, when skillful or unskillful mental qualities—such as the factors for awakening or the hindrances—arise and pass away, one is encouraged to foster the factors that strengthen jhāna and eliminate those that weaken it. This means actively getting engaged in maximizing skillful mental qualities and minimizing unskillful ones. One thus develops insight into the process of origination and passing away by taking an active and sensitive role in the process, just as you learn about eggs by trying to cook with them, gathering experience from your successes and failures in attempting increasingly difficult dishes.

As this process leads to stronger and more refined states of concentration, it makes one sensitive to the fact that the grosser one’s participation in the process of origination and passing away in the mind, the grosser the level of stress that results. This leads one to let go, first of grosser levels of participation, and then increasingly refined ones as one is able to detect them, leading to the third and final stage in satipaṭṭhāna practice:

Or his mindfulness that ‘There is a body’ is maintained (simply) to the extent of knowledge & recollection. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world.

This stage corresponds to a mode of perception that the Buddha in MN 121 terms “entry into emptiness”:

Thus he regards it [this mode of perception] as empty of whatever is not there. Whatever remains, he discerns as present: “There is this.”

This is the culminating equipoise where the path of the practice opens to a state of non-fashioning (atammayatā—see MN 137) and from there to the fruit of awakening and release.

These few examples show how important it is, in reading this sutta, to remember that its treatment of satipaṭṭhāna, though extensive, is incomplete and needs to be understood in terms of the larger context of teachings provided by the Canon on all the other factors of the path.

The notes to this sutta provide some beginning guidance in where to look for this further information, as do the recommended sutta readings listed at the end.

Note on the translation

This translation is based on the Thai edition of the sutta, which is identical with its version of DN 22. Other editions of the Canon omit the long section explaining the four noble truths, which is here contained in double braces, like this: {{ }}.

* * *

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying among the Kurus. Now there is a town of the Kurus called Kammāsadhamma. There the Blessed One addressed the monks, "Monks."

"Lord," the monks responded to him.

The Blessed One said: "This is the direct path1 for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow & lamentation, for the disappearance of pain & distress, for the attainment of the right method, & for the realization of unbinding—in other words, the four establishings of mindfulness. Which four?

"There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings… mind… mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent,2 alert,3 & mindful4—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world.5

A. Body

"And how does a monk remain focused on the body in & of itself?

[1] "There is the case where a monk—having gone to the wilderness, to the shade of a tree, or to an empty building—sits down folding his legs crosswise, holding his body erect and establishing mindfulness to the fore.6 Always mindful, he breathes in; mindful he breathes out.

"Breathing in long, he discerns, 'I am breathing in long'; or breathing out long, he discerns, 'I am breathing out long.' Or breathing in short, he discerns, 'I am breathing in short'; or breathing out short, he discerns, 'I am breathing out short.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to the entire body';7 he trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to the entire body.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe in calming bodily fabrication';8 he

trains himself, 'I will breathe out calming bodily fabrication.' Just as a dexterous turner or his apprentice, when making a long turn, discerns, 'I am making a long turn,' or when making a short turn discerns, 'I am making a short turn'; in the same way the monk, when breathing in long, discerns, 'I am breathing in long'; or breathing out long, he discerns, 'I am breathing out long.' ... He trains himself, 'I will breathe in calming bodily fabrication'; he trains himself, 'I will breathe out calming bodily fabrication.'

"In this way he remains focused internally on the body in & of itself, or externally on the body in & of itself, or both internally & externally on the body in & of itself. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the body, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the body, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to the body. Or his mindfulness that 'There is a body' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself.

[2] "And further, when walking, the monk discerns, 'I am walking.' When standing, he discerns, 'I am standing.' When sitting, he discerns, 'I am sitting.' When lying down, he discerns, 'I am lying down.' Or however his body is disposed, that is how he discerns it.

"In this way he remains focused internally on the body in & of itself, or externally on the body in & of itself, or both internally & externally on the body in & of itself. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the body, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the body, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to the body. Or his mindfulness that 'There is a body' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself.

[3] "And further, when going forward & returning, he makes himself fully alert; when looking toward & looking away... when flexing & extending his limbs... when carrying his outer cloak, his upper robe, & his bowl... when eating, drinking, chewing, & savoring... when urinating & defecating... when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, & remaining silent, he makes himself fully alert.

"In this way he remains focused internally on the body in & of itself, or externally on the body in & of itself, or both internally & externally on the body in & of itself. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the body, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the body, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to the body. Or his mindfulness that 'There is a body' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself.

[4] "And further... just as if a sack with openings at both ends were full of various kinds of grain—wheat, rice, mung beans, kidney beans, sesame seeds, husked rice—and a man

with good eyesight, pouring it out, were to reflect, 'This is wheat. This is rice. These are mung beans. These are kidney beans. These are sesame seeds. This is husked rice,' in the same way, the monk reflects on this very body from the soles of the feet on up, from the crown of the head on down, surrounded by skin and full of various kinds of unclean things: 'In this body there are head hairs, body hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, tendons, bones, bone marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, pleura, spleen, lungs, large intestines, small intestines, gorge, feces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, skin-oil, saliva, mucus, fluid in the joints, urine.'

"In this way he remains focused internally on the body in & of itself, or externally on the body in & of itself, or both internally & externally on the body in & of itself. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the body, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the body, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to the body. Or his mindfulness that 'There is a body' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself.

[5] "And further... just as a dexterous butcher or his apprentice, having killed a cow, would sit at a crossroads cutting it up into pieces, the monk reflects on this very body—however it stands, however it is disposed—in terms of properties: 'In this body there is the earth property, the liquid property, the fire property, & the wind property.'9

"In this way he remains focused internally on the body in & of itself, or externally on the body in & of itself, or both internally & externally on the body in & of itself. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the body, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the body, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to the body. Or his mindfulness that 'There is a body' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself.

[6] "And further, as if he were to see a corpse cast away in a charnel ground—one day, two days, three days dead—bloated, livid, & festering, he applies it to this very body, 'This body, too: Such is its nature, such is its future, such its unavoidable fate.'

"In this way he remains focused internally on the body in & of itself, or externally on the body in & of itself, or both internally & externally on the body in & of itself. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the body, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the body, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to the body. Or his mindfulness that 'There is a body' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself.

“Or again, as if he were to see a corpse cast away in a charnel ground, being chewed by crows, being chewed by vultures, being chewed by hawks, being chewed by dogs, being chewed by hyenas, being chewed by various other creatures… a skeleton smeared with flesh & blood, connected with tendons… a fleshless skeleton smeared with blood, connected with tendons… a skeleton without flesh or blood, connected with tendons… bones detached from their tendons, scattered in all directions—here a hand bone, there a foot bone, here a shin bone, there a thigh bone, here a hip bone, there a back bone, here a rib, there a chest bone, here a shoulder bone, there a neck bone, here a jaw bone, there a tooth, here a skull… the bones whitened, somewhat like the color of shells… the bones piled up, more than a year old… the bones decomposed into a powder: He applies it to this very body, ‘This body, too: Such is its nature, such is its future, such its unavoidable fate.’

“In this way he remains focused internally on the body in & of itself, or externally on the body in & of itself, or both internally & externally on the body in & of itself. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the body, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the body, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to the body. Or his mindfulness that ‘There is a body’ is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself.

B. Feelings

“And how does a monk remain focused on feelings in & of themselves? There is the case where a monk, when feeling a painful feeling, discerns, ‘I am feeling a painful feeling.’ When feeling a pleasant feeling, he discerns, ‘I am feeling a pleasant feeling.’ When feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, he discerns, ‘I am feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.’

“When feeling a painful feeling of the flesh, he discerns, ‘I am feeling a painful feeling of the flesh.’ When feeling a painful feeling not of the flesh, he discerns, ‘I am feeling a painful feeling not of the flesh.’ When feeling a pleasant feeling of the flesh, he discerns, ‘I am feeling a pleasant feeling of the flesh.’ When feeling a pleasant feeling not of the flesh, he discerns, ‘I am feeling a pleasant feeling not of the flesh.’ When feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling of the flesh, he discerns, ‘I am feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling of the flesh.’ When feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling not of the flesh, he discerns, ‘I am feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling not of the flesh.’10

“In this way he remains focused internally on feelings in & of themselves, or externally on feelings in & of themselves, or both internally & externally on feelings in & of themselves. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to feelings, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to feelings, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to feelings. Or his mindfulness that ‘There are feelings’ is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk

remains focused on feelings in & of themselves.

C. Mind

“And how does a monk remain focused on the mind in & of itself? There is the case where a monk, when the mind has passion, discerns, ‘The mind has passion.’ When the mind is without passion, he discerns, ‘The mind is without passion.’ When the mind has aversion, he discerns, ‘The mind has aversion.’ When the mind is without aversion, he discerns, ‘The mind is without aversion.’ When the mind has delusion, he discerns, ‘The mind has delusion.’ When the mind is without delusion, he discerns, ‘The mind is without delusion.’11

“When the mind is constricted, he discerns, ‘The mind is constricted.’ When the mind is scattered, he discerns, ‘The mind is scattered.’12 When the mind is enlarged,13 he discerns, ‘The mind is enlarged.’ When the mind is not enlarged, he discerns, ‘The mind is not enlarged.’ When the mind is surpassed, he discerns, ‘The mind is surpassed.’ When the mind is unsurpassed, he discerns, ‘The mind is unsurpassed.’ When the mind is concentrated, he discerns, ‘The mind is concentrated.’ When the mind is not concentrated, he discerns, ‘The mind is not concentrated.’ When the mind is released,14 he discerns, ‘The mind is released.’ When the mind is not released, he discerns, ‘The mind is not released.’

“In this way he remains focused internally on the mind in & of itself, or externally on the mind in & of itself, or both internally & externally on the mind in & of itself. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the mind, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the mind, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to the mind. Or his mindfulness that ‘There is a mind’ is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the mind in & of itself.

D. Mental Qualities

“And how does a monk remain focused on mental qualities in & of themselves?

[1] “There is the case where a monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the five hindrances. And how does a monk remain focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the five hindrances? There is the case where, there being sensual desire present within, a monk discerns, ‘There is sensual desire present within me.’ Or, there being no sensual desire present within, he discerns, ‘There is no sensual desire present within me.’ He discerns how there is the arising of unarisen sensual desire. And he discerns how there is the abandoning of sensual desire once it has arisen.15 And he discerns how there is no further appearance in the future of sensual desire that has been abandoned. [The same formula is repeated for the remaining hindrances: ill will, sloth & drowsiness, restlessness & anxiety, and uncertainty.]

“In this way he remains focused internally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or externally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or both internally & externally on mental qualities in & of themselves. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to mental qualities, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to mental qualities, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to mental qualities. Or his mindfulness that ‘There are mental qualities’ is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the five hindrances.

[2] “And further, the monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the five clinging-aggregates. And how does a monk remain focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the five clinging-aggregates? There is the case where a monk [discerns]: ‘Such is form, such its origination, such its disappearance. Such is feeling… Such is perception… Such are fabrications… Such is consciousness, such its origination, such its disappearance.’16

“In this way he remains focused internally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or externally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or both internally & externally on mental qualities in & of themselves. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to mental qualities, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to mental qualities, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to mental qualities. Or his mindfulness that ‘There are mental qualities’ is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the five clinging-aggregates.

[3] “And further, the monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the sixfold internal & external sense media. And how does a monk remain focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the sixfold internal & external sense media? There is the case where he discerns the eye, he discerns forms, he discerns the fetter that arises dependent on both.17 He discerns how there is the arising of an unarisen fetter. And he discerns how there is the abandoning of a fetter once it has arisen. And he discerns how there is no further appearance in the future of a fetter that has been abandoned. [The same formula is repeated for the remaining sense media: ear, nose, tongue, body, & intellect.]

“In this way he remains focused internally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or externally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or both internally & externally on mental qualities in & of themselves. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to mental qualities, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to mental qualities, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to mental qualities. Or his mindfulness that ‘There are mental qualities’ is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the sixfold internal & external sense media.

[4] “And further, the monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the seven factors for awakening. And how does a monk remain focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the seven factors for awakening? There is the case where, there being mindfulness as a factor for awakening present within, he discerns, ‘Mindfulness as a factor for awakening is present within me.’ Or, there being no mindfulness as a factor for awakening present within, he discerns, ‘Mindfulness as a factor for awakening is not present within me.’ He discerns how there is the arising of unarisen mindfulness as a factor for awakening. And he discerns how there is the culmination of the development of mindfulness as a factor for awakening once it has arisen.18 [The same formula is repeated for the remaining factors for awakening: analysis of qualities, persistence, rapture, calm, concentration, & equanimity.]

“In this way he remains focused internally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or externally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or both internally & externally on mental qualities in & of themselves. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to mental qualities, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to mental qualities, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to mental qualities. Or his mindfulness that ‘There are mental qualities’ is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the seven factors for awakening.

[5] “And further, the monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the four noble truths. And how does a monk remain focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the four noble truths? There is the case where he discerns, as it has come to be, that ‘This is stress…This is the origination of stress…This is the cessation of stress…This is the way leading to the cessation of stress.’19

{{[a] “Now what is the noble truth of stress? Birth is stressful, aging is stressful, death is stressful; sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are stressful; association with the unbeloved is stressful; separation from the loved is stressful; not getting what is wanted is stressful. In short, the five clinging-aggregates are stressful.

“And what is birth? Whatever birth, taking birth, descent, coming-to-be, coming-forth, appearance of aggregates, & acquisition of [sense] spheres of the various beings in this or that group of beings, that is called birth.

“And what is aging? Whatever aging, decrepitude, brokenness, graying, wrinkling, decline of life-force, weakening of the faculties of the various beings in this or that group of beings, that is called aging.

“And what is death? Whatever deceasing, passing away, breaking up, disappearance, dying, death, completion of time, break up of the aggregates, casting off of the body, interruption in the life faculty of the various beings in this or that group of beings, that is called death.

“And what is sorrow? Whatever sorrow, sorrowing, sadness, inward sorrow, inward sadness of anyone suffering from misfortune, touched by a painful thing, that is called sorrow.

“And what is lamentation? Whatever crying, grieving, lamenting, weeping, wailing, lamentation of anyone suffering from misfortune, touched by a painful thing, that is called lamentation.

“And what is pain? Whatever is experienced as bodily pain, bodily discomfort, pain or discomfort born of bodily contact, that is called pain.

“And what is distress? Whatever is experienced as mental pain, mental discomfort, pain or discomfort born of mental contact, that is called distress.

“And what is despair? Whatever despair, despondency, desperation of anyone suffering from misfortune, touched by a painful thing, that is called despair.

“And what is the stress of association with the unbeloved? There is the case where undesirable, unpleasing, unattractive sights, sounds, aromas, flavors, or tactile sensations occur to one; or one has connection, contact, relationship, interaction with those who wish one ill, who wish for one’s harm, who wish for one’s discomfort, who wish one no security from the yoke. This is called the stress of association with the unbeloved.

“And what is the stress of separation from the loved? There is the case where desirable, pleasing, attractive sights, sounds, aromas, flavors, or tactile sensations do not occur to one; or one has no connection, no contact, no relationship, no interaction with those who wish one well, who wish for one’s benefit, who wish for one’s comfort, who wish one security from the yoke, nor with one’s mother, father, brother, sister, friends, companions, or relatives. This is called the stress of separation from the loved.

“And what is the stress of not getting what is wanted? In beings subject to birth, the wish arises, ‘O, may we not be subject to birth, and may birth not come to us.’ But this is not to be achieved by wishing. This is the stress of not getting what is wanted. In beings subject to aging… illness… death… sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair, the wish arises, ‘O, may we not be subject to aging… illness… death… sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair, and may aging… illness… death… sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair not come to us.’ But this is not to be achieved by wishing. This is the stress of not getting what is wanted.

“And what are the five clinging-aggregates that, in short, are stressful? The form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrications clinging-aggregate, the consciousness clinging-aggregate: These are called the five clinging-aggregates that, in short, are stressful.

“This is called the noble truth of stress.

[b] “And what is the noble truth of the origination of stress? The craving that makes for further becoming—accompanied by passion & delight, relishing now here & now there—i.e., sensuality-craving, becoming-craving, and non-becoming-craving.

“And where does this craving, when arising, arise? And where, when dwelling, does it dwell? Whatever is endearing & alluring in terms of the world: that is where this craving, when arising, arises. That is where, when dwelling, it dwells.

“And what is endearing & alluring in terms of the world? The eye is endearing & alluring in terms of the world. That is where this craving, when arising, arises. That is where, when dwelling, it dwells.

“The ear.... The nose.... The tongue.... The body.... The intellect....

“Forms.... Sounds.... Aromas.... Tastes.... Tactile sensations.... Ideas....

“Eye-consciousness.... Ear-consciousness.... Nose-consciousness.... Tongue-consciousness.... Body-consciousness.... Intellect-consciousness....

“Eye-contact.... Ear-contact.... Nose-contact.... Tongue-contact.... Body-contact.... Intellect-contact....

“Feeling born of eye-contact.... Feeling born of ear-contact.... Feeling born of nose-contact.... Feeling born of tongue-contact.... Feeling born of body-contact.... Feeling born of intellect-contact....

“Perception of forms.... Perception of sounds.... Perception of aromas.... Perception of tastes.... Perception of tactile sensations.... Perception of ideas....

“Intention for forms.... Intention for sounds.... Intention for aromas.... Intention for tastes.... Intention for tactile sensations.... Intention for ideas....

“Craving for forms.... Craving for sounds.... Craving for aromas.... Craving for tastes.... Craving for tactile sensations.... Craving for ideas....

“Thought directed at forms.... Thought directed at sounds.... Thought directed at aromas.... Thought directed at tastes.... Thought directed at tactile sensations.... Thought directed at ideas....

“Evaluation of forms.... Evaluation of sounds.... Evaluation of aromas.... Evaluation of tastes.... Evaluation of tactile sensations.... Evaluation of ideas is endearing & alluring in terms of the world. That is where this craving, when arising, arises. That is where, when dwelling, it dwells.

“This is called the noble truth of the origination of stress.

[c] “And what is the noble truth of the cessation of stress? The remainderless fading & cessation, renunciation, relinquishment, release, & letting go of that very craving.

“And where, when being abandoned, is this craving abandoned? And where, when ceasing, does it cease? Whatever is endearing & alluring in terms of the world: that is where, when being abandoned, this craving is abandoned. That is where, when ceasing, it ceases.

“And what is endearing & alluring in terms of the world? The eye is endearing & alluring in terms of the world. That is where, when being abandoned, this craving is abandoned. That is where, when ceasing, it ceases.

“The ear.... The nose.... The tongue.... The body.... The intellect....

“Forms.... Sounds.... Aromas.... Tastes.... Tactile sensations.... Ideas....

“Eye-consciousness.... Ear-consciousness.... Nose-consciousness.... Tongue-consciousness.... Body-consciousness.... Intellect-consciousness....

“Eye-contact.... Ear-contact.... Nose-contact.... Tongue-contact.... Body-contact.... Intellect-contact....

“Feeling born of eye-contact.... Feeling born of ear-contact.... Feeling born of nose-contact.... Feeling born of tongue-contact.... Feeling born of body-contact.... Feeling born of intellect-contact....

“Perception of forms.... Perception of sounds.... Perception of aromas.... Perception of tastes.... Perception of tactile sensations.... Perception of ideas....

“Intention for forms.... Intention for sounds.... Intention for aromas.... Intention for tastes.... Intention for tactile sensations.... Intention for ideas....

“Craving for forms.... Craving for sounds.... Craving for aromas.... Craving for tastes.... Craving for tactile sensations.... Craving for ideas....

“Thought directed at forms.... Thought directed at sounds.... Thought directed at aromas.... Thought directed at tastes.... Thought directed at tactile sensations.... Thought directed at ideas....

“Evaluation of forms.... Evaluation of sounds.... Evaluation of aromas.... Evaluation of tastes.... Evaluation of tactile sensations.... Evaluation of ideas is endearing & alluring in terms of the world. That is where, when being abandoned, this craving is abandoned. That is where, when ceasing, it ceases.

“This is called the noble truth of the cessation of stress.

[d] “And what is the noble truth of the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress? Just this very noble eightfold path: right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right

livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

“And what is right view? Knowledge with reference to stress, knowledge with reference to the origination of stress, knowledge with reference to the cessation of stress, knowledge with reference to the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress: This is called right view.

And what is right resolve? Resolve for renunciation, resolve for freedom from ill will, resolve for harmlessness: This is called right resolve.

“And what is right speech? Abstaining from lying, from divisive speech, from abusive speech, & from idle chatter: This is called right speech.

“And what is right action? Abstaining from taking life, from stealing, & from sexual misconduct: This is called right action.

“And what is right livelihood? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones, having abandoned dishonest livelihood, keeps his life going with right livelihood. This is called right livelihood.

“And what is right effort? There is the case where a monk generates desire, endeavors, arouses persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen… for the sake of the abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen… for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen… (and) for the maintenance, non-confusion, increase, plenitude, development, & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen. This is called right effort.

“And what is right mindfulness? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves… the mind in & of itself… mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. This is called right mindfulness.

“And what is right concentration? There is the case where a monk—quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities—enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. With the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters & remains in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. With the fading of rapture he remains equanimous, mindful, & alert, and senses pleasure with the body. He enters & remains in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare, ‘Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.’ With the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress—he enters & remains in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. This is called right concentration.

“This is called the noble truth of the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.

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“In this way he remains focused internally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or externally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or both internally & externally on mental qualities in & of themselves. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to mental qualities, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to mental qualities, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to mental qualities. Or his mindfulness that ‘There are mental qualities’ is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the four noble truths.

E. Conclusion

“Now, if anyone would develop these four establishings of mindfulness in this way for seven years, one of two fruits can be expected for him: either gnosis right here & now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return.

“Let alone seven years. If anyone would develop these four establishings of mindfulness in this way for six years… five… four… three… two years… one year… seven months… six months… five… four… three… two months… one month… half a month, one of two fruits can be expected for him: either gnosis right here & now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return.

“Let alone half a month. If anyone would develop these four establishings of mindfulness in this way for seven days, one of two fruits can be expected for him: either gnosis right here & now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return.

“‘This is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow & lamentation, for the disappearance of pain & distress, for the attainment of the right method, & for the realization of unbinding—in other words, the four establishings of mindfulness.’ Thus was it said, and in reference to this was it said.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monks delighted in the Blessed One’s words.

Notes

1. Ekāyana-magga. For decades, this term was translated as “the only way,” but more recently—beginning with Ven. Ñāṇamoli—translators have noted that the phrase ekāyana magga appears in a series of similes in MN 12 where it reveals its idiomatic sense. In each of the similes, the Buddha describes his knowledge of the destination of an individual on a particular path of practice. He sees that the way the individual conducts himself will lead inevitably to a particular destination. He then compares his knowledge to that of a person seeing an individual following an ekāyana magga to a particular destination and knowing that the individual will have to end up there for sure. For the similes to work, ekāyana

magga requires the sense, not of an only way, but of a way that goes to only one destination. In other words, an ekāyana magga is a path that doesn't fork—one that, as long as you follow it, takes you to a single, inevitable goal.

Of the similes in MN 12, one deals with an ekāyana magga to unbinding—which, of course, would apply to the practice of right mindfulness:

"Suppose that there were a lotus pond with pristine water, pleasing water, cool water, pellucid water; with restful banks, refreshing; and not far from it was a dense forest grove. A man—scorched with heat, overcome by heat, exhausted, trembling, & thirsty—would come along a path going one way only [ekāyana magga] directed to that lotus pond. A man with good eyes, on seeing him, would say, 'The way this individual has practiced, the way he conducts himself, and the path he has entered are such that he will come to that lotus pond.' Then at a later time he would see him—having plunged into the lotus pond, having bathed & drunk & relieved all his disturbance, exhaustion, & fever, and having come back out—sitting or lying down in the forest grove, experiencing feelings that are exclusively pleasant.

"In the same way, Sāriputta, there is the case where—having thus encompassed awareness with awareness—I know of a certain individual: 'The way this individual has practiced, the way he conducts himself, and the path he has entered are such that he will, through the ending of the effluents, enter & remain in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for himself right in the here & now.' Then at a later time I see him, through the ending of the effluents—having entered & remaining in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for himself right in the here & now—experiencing feelings that are exclusively pleasant." — MN 12

2. Ven. Mahā Kassapa: "And how is one ardent? There is the case where a monk, (thinking,) 'Unarisen evil, unskillful qualities arising in me would lead to what is unbeneficial,' arouses ardency. (Thinking,) 'Arisen evil, unskillful qualities not being abandoned in me...' ... 'Unarisen skillful qualities not arising in me ...' ... 'Arisen skillful qualities ceasing in me would lead to what is unbeneficial,' he arouses ardency. This is how one is ardent." —SN 16:2

"And how is mindfulness the governing principle? The mindfulness that 'I will make complete any training with regard to good conduct that is not yet complete, or I will protect with discernment any training with regard to good conduct that is complete' is well established right within. The mindfulness that 'I will make complete any training with regard to the basics of the holy life that is not yet complete, or I will protect with discernment any training with regard to the basics of the holy life that is complete' is well established right within. The mindfulness that 'I will scrutinize with discernment any Dhamma that is not yet scrutinized, or I will protect with discernment any Dhamma that has been scrutinized' is well established right within. The mindfulness that 'I will touch through release any Dhamma that is not yet touched, or I will protect with discernment any Dhamma that has been touched' is well established right within. This is how

mindfulness is the governing principle." — AN 4:245

3. "And how is a monk alert? There is the case where feelings are known to the monk as they arise, known as they become established, known as they subside. Thoughts are known to him as they arise, known as they become established, known as they subside. Perceptions are known to him as they arise, known as they become established, known as they subside. This is how a monk is alert." —SN 47:35

"And how is a monk alert? When going forward & returning, he makes himself alert; when looking toward & looking away... when bending & extending his limbs... when carrying his outer cloak, his upper robe, & his bowl... when eating, drinking, chewing, & savoring... when urinating & defecating... when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, & remaining silent, he makes himself alert. This is how a monk is alert." —SN 36:7

4. "And which is the faculty of mindfulness? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones is mindful, is endowed with excellent proficiency in mindfulness, remembering & recollecting what was done and said a long time ago. He remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves... the mind in & of itself... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. This is called the faculty of mindfulness." —SN 48:10

5. The discourses define "world" in two ways, both of which are relevant here:

Then a certain monk went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One: "'The world, the world [loka],' it is said. In what respect does the word 'world' apply?

"Insofar as it disintegrates [lujjati], monk, it is called the 'world.' Now what disintegrates? The eye disintegrates. Forms disintegrate. Consciousness at the eye disintegrates. Contact at the eye disintegrates. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the eye—experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that too disintegrates.

"The ear disintegrates. Sounds disintegrate...

"The nose disintegrates. Aromas disintegrate...

"The tongue disintegrates. Tastes disintegrate...

"The body disintegrates. Tactile sensations disintegrate...

"The intellect disintegrates. Ideas disintegrate. Consciousness at the intellect disintegrates. Contact at the intellect disintegrates. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the intellect—experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that too disintegrates.

“Insofar as it disintegrates, it is called the ‘world.’” — SN 35:82

“These five strings of sensuality are, in the discipline of the noble ones, called the world. Which five? Forms cognizable via the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked to sensual desire; sounds cognizable via the ear… aromas cognizable via the nose… flavors cognizable via the tongue… tactile sensations cognizable via the body—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked to sensual desire. These are the five strings of sensuality that, in the discipline of the noble ones, are called the world.” —AN 9:38

6. To the fore (parimukhaṁ): An Abhidhamma text, Vibhaṅga 12:1, defines this term as meaning “the tip of the nose or the sign of the mouth.” However, the term appears as part of a stock phrase describing a person engaged in meditation, even for themes that have nothing to do with the body at all, such as sublime-attitude (brahma-vihāra) meditation (AN 3:64). Thus it seems more likely that the term is used in an idiomatic sense, indicating either that mindfulness is placed face-to-face with its object, or that it is made prominent, which is how I have translated it here.

7. The commentaries insist that “body” here means the full length of the breath, but this is unlikely in this context, for three reasons: (a) The first two steps already require being aware of the entire length of the breath. Otherwise, the meditator wouldn’t know if a breath was short or long. (b) The fourth step—without further explanation—refers to the breath as “bodily fabrication.” If the Buddha were using two different terms to refer to the breath—“body” and “bodily fabrication”—in such close proximity, he would have been careful to signal that he was redefining his terms (as he does below, when explaining that the first four steps in breath meditation correspond to the practice of focusing on the body in and of itself as a frame of reference). But he doesn’t. (c) As AN 10:20 indicates, the fourth step refers to bringing the mind to the fourth jhāna, a state in which in-and-out breathing grows still (SN 36:11; AN 10:72) and the body is filled with pure, bright awareness (after awareness has been extended to be sensitive to the entire body beginning with the first jhāna (DN 2; MN 119)). Because the fourth step focuses on the stilling of the breath, there has to be a step in which the awareness is extended to fill the entire body. That would be this step.

8. “In-&-out breaths are bodily; these are things tied up with the body. That’s why in-&-out breaths are bodily fabrications.” —MN 44.

“And how is a monk calmed in his bodily fabrication? There is the case where a monk, with the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress—enters & remains in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain.” — AN 10:20

“When one has attained the fourth jhāna, in-and-out breaths have ceased.” — SN 36:11 & AN 9:31

9. See MN 28 and MN 140.

10. SN 36:31 defines pleasure not of the flesh as the pleasure experienced in the first three jhānas. Similarly, the neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling not of the flesh is equivalent to the feeling of equanimity not of the flesh experienced in the fourth jhāna (SN 48:38). Feelings of this sort don't simply come on their own. They're a product of fabrication. They have to be induced. And as the standard similes for the practice of jhāna show, the feelings of pleasure not of the flesh experienced in the first three jhānas aren't simply induced; they're spread and suffused until they permeate and fill the entire body.

"Painful feeling not of the flesh" is nowhere defined in the Canon, but we can derive from the discourses two possible ways of understanding it. On the one hand, it could be the sense of mental displeasure experienced while engaging in the contemplation of the unattractiveness of the body or the perception of death, which are painful ways to awakening (AN 4:163). On the other hand, a passage from MN 44 suggests that a painful feeling not of the flesh would be the distress that accompanies this thought: "O when will I enter & remain in the dimension that the noble ones now enter & remain in?" In other words, it's the feeling of distress you experience when contemplating how much you want to attain the goal and you haven't yet attained it. Another example of this sort of distress would be the reflection given in MN 28: "It is a loss for me, not a gain; ill-gotten for me, not well-gotten, that when I recollect the Buddha, Dhamma, & Saṅgha in this way, equanimity based on what is skillful is not established within me."

As MN 137 shows, painful feelings of this sort are not to be avoided. Instead, they are to be cultivated as an antidote to painful feelings of the flesh in order to provide an impetus to practice until one arrives at feelings of pleasure and equanimity not of the flesh.

11. "And what are the effluents to be abandoned by destroying? There is the case where a monk, reflecting appropriately, doesn't acquiesce to an arisen thought of sensuality. He abandons it, dispels it, wipes it out of existence.

"Reflecting appropriately, he doesn't acquiesce to an arisen thought of ill will. He abandons it, dispels it, & wipes it out of existence.

"Reflecting appropriately, he doesn't acquiesce to an arisen thought of harmfulness. He abandons it, dispels it, wipes it out of existence.

"Reflecting appropriately, he doesn't acquiesce to any arisen evil, unskillful qualities. He abandons them, dispels them, wipes them out of existence. The effluents, vexation, or fever that would arise if he were not to dispel these things do not arise for him when he dispels them. These are called the effluents to be abandoned by dispelling." —MN 2

"And how is a monk skilled in reading his own mind? Imagine a young woman—or man—youthful, fond of adornment, examining the image of her own face in a bright, clean mirror or bowl of clear water: If she saw any dirt or blemish there, she would try to remove it. If she saw no dirt or blemish there, she would be pleased, her resolves fulfilled: 'How fortunate I am! How clean I am!' In the same way, a monk's self-examination is very productive in terms of skillful qualities [if he conducts it in this way]: 'Do I usually remain

covetous or not? With thoughts of ill will or not? Overcome by sloth & drowsiness or not? Restless or not? Uncertain or gone beyond uncertainty? Angry or not? With soiled thoughts or unsoiled thoughts? With my body aroused or unaroused? Lazy or with persistence aroused? Unconcentrated or concentrated?'

"If, on examination, a monk knows, 'I usually remain covetous, with thoughts of ill will, overcome by sloth & drowsiness, restless, uncertain, angry, with soiled thoughts, with my body aroused, lazy, or unconcentrated,' then he should put forth intense desire, effort, diligence, endeavor, relentlessness, mindfulness, & alertness for the abandoning of those very same evil, unskillful qualities. Just as when a person whose turban or head was on fire would put forth intense desire, effort, diligence, endeavor, relentlessness, mindfulness, & alertness to put out the fire on his turban or head; in the same way, the monk should put forth intense desire, effort, diligence, endeavor, relentlessness, mindfulness, & alertness for the abandoning of those very same evil, unskillful qualities.

"But if, on examination, a monk knows, 'I usually remain uncovetous, without thoughts of ill will, free of sloth & drowsiness, not restless, gone beyond uncertainty, not angry, with unsoiled thoughts, with my body unaroused, with persistence aroused, & concentrated,' then his duty is to make an effort in establishing ['tuning'] those very same skillful qualities to a higher degree for the ending of the effluents." — AN 10:51

12. "There is the case where a monk develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on desire & the fabrications of exertion, thinking, 'This desire of mine will be neither overly sluggish nor overly active, neither inwardly constricted nor outwardly scattered.' ...

"And how is desire overly sluggish? Whatever desire is accompanied by laziness, conjoined with laziness: This is called overly sluggish desire.

"And how is desire overly active? Whatever desire is accompanied by restlessness, conjoined with restlessness: This is called overly active desire.

"And how is desire inwardly constricted? Whatever desire is accompanied by sloth & drowsiness, conjoined with sloth & drowsiness: This is called inwardly constricted desire.

"And how is desire outwardly scattered? Whatever desire is stirred up by the five strands of sensuality, outwardly dispersed & dissipated, this is called outwardly scattered desire.

"[Similarly with the other bases of power: concentration founded on persistence, on intent, and discrimination.]" — SN 51:20

13. Mahaggataṁ. This term is used, together with "immeasurable / unlimited," in the standard description of the awareness generated in the practice of the brahmavihāras (SN 42:8). According to Ven. Anuruddha in MN 127, however, an enlarged mind is not immeasurable. Its range of awareness is larger than the body but still measurable, ranging in distance from the shade of a tree to the earth bounded by the ocean.

14. On the various levels of release, see MN 43 and AN 9:43–45.

15. “Now, what is lack of food for the arising of unarisen sensual desire, or for the growth & increase of sensual desire once it has arisen? There is the theme of unattractiveness. To foster appropriate attention to it: This is lack of food for the arising of unarisen sensual desire, or for the growth & increase of sensual desire once it has arisen.

“And what is lack of food for the arising of unarisen ill will, or for the growth & increase of ill will once it has arisen? There is the release of the mind [through good will, compassion, empathetic joy, or equanimity]. To foster appropriate attention to that: This is lack of food for the arising of unarisen ill will, or for the growth & increase of ill will once it has arisen.

“And what is lack of food for the arising of unarisen sloth & drowsiness, or for the growth & increase of sloth & drowsiness once it has arisen? There is the potential for effort, the potential for exertion, the potential for striving. To foster appropriate attention to them: This is lack of food for the arising of unarisen sloth & drowsiness, or for the growth & increase of sloth & drowsiness once it has arisen.

“And what is lack of food for the arising of unarisen restlessness & anxiety, or for the growth & increase of restlessness & anxiety once it has arisen? There is stillness of awareness. To foster appropriate attention to that: This is lack of food for the arising of unarisen restlessness & anxiety, or for the growth & increase of restlessness & anxiety once it has arisen.

“And what is lack of food for the arising of unarisen uncertainty, or for the growth & increase of uncertainty once it has arisen? There are mental qualities that are skillful & unskillful, blameworthy & blameless, gross & refined, siding with darkness & with light. To foster appropriate attention to them: This is lack of food for the arising of unarisen uncertainty, or for the growth & increase of uncertainty once it has arisen.” — SN 46:51

16. “Develop concentration, monks. A concentrated monk discerns things as they have come to be. And what does he discern as it has come to be?

“The origination & disappearance of form… of feeling… of perception… of fabrications… of consciousness.

“And what is the origination of form… of feeling… of perception… of fabrications… of consciousness? There is the case where one relishes, welcomes, & remains fastened. To what? One relishes form, welcomes it, & remains fastened to it. While one is relishing form, welcoming it, & remaining fastened to it, delight arises. Any delight in form is clinging. With that clinging as a condition there is becoming. With becoming as a condition there is birth. With birth as a condition then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all come into play. Thus is the origination of this entire mass of suffering & stress. [Similarly with feeling, perception, fabrications, & consciousness.]

“And what is the disappearance of form… of feeling… of perception… of fabrications… of consciousness? There is the case where one does not relish, welcome or remain fastened. To what? One does not relish form, welcome it, or remain fastened to it. While one is not relishing form, welcoming it, or remaining fastened to it, one’s delight in form ceases. From the cessation of that delight, clinging ceases. From the cessation of clinging, becoming ceases. From the cessation of becoming, birth ceases. From the cessation of birth, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Thus is the cessation of this entire mass of suffering & stress. [Similarly with feeling, perception, fabrications, & consciousness.]” — SN 22:5

17. Ven. Sāriputta: “Suppose that a black ox and a white ox were joined with a single collar or yoke. If someone were to say, ‘The black ox is the fetter of the white ox, the white ox is the fetter of the black’—speaking this way, would he be speaking rightly?”

Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita: “No, my friend. The black ox is not the fetter of the white ox, nor is the white ox the fetter of the black. The single collar or yoke by which they are joined: That is the fetter there.”

Ven. Sāriputta: “In the same way, the eye is not the fetter of forms, nor are forms the fetter of the eye. Whatever desire-passion arises in dependence on the two of them: That is the fetter there. The ear is not the fetter of sounds…. The nose is not the fetter of aromas…. The tongue is not the fetter of flavors…. The body is not the fetter of tactile sensations…. The intellect is not the fetter of ideas, nor are ideas the fetter of the intellect. Whatever desire-passion arises in dependence on the two of them: That is the fetter there.” — SN 35:191

18. “Now, what is the food for the arising of unarisen mindfulness as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of mindfulness… once it has arisen? There are qualities that act as a foothold for mindfulness as a factor for awakening. [According to SN 47:16, these are well-purified virtue & views made straight; according to MN 118, they would include the qualities fostered by the sixteen steps of breath meditation.] To foster appropriate attention to them: This is the food for the arising of unarisen mindfulness as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of mindfulness… once it has arisen.

“And what is the food for the arising of unarisen analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of analysis of qualities… once it has arisen? There are qualities that are skillful & unskillful, blameworthy & blameless, gross & refined, siding with darkness & with light. To foster appropriate attention to them: This is the food for the arising of unarisen analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of analysis of qualities… once it has arisen.

“And what is the food for the arising of unarisen persistence as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of persistence… once it has arisen? There is the potential for effort, the potential for exertion, the potential for striving. To foster appropriate attention to them: This is the food for the arising of unarisen persistence as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of persistence… once it has arisen.

“And what is the food for the arising of unarisen rapture as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of rapture… once it has arisen? There are mental qualities that act as a foothold for rapture as a factor for awakening. To foster appropriate attention to them: This is the food for the arising of unarisen rapture as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of rapture… once it has arisen.

“And what is the food for the arising of unarisen calm as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of calm… once it has arisen? There is physical calm & there is mental calm. To foster appropriate attention to them: This is the food for the arising of unarisen calm as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of calm… once it has arisen.

“And what is the food for the arising of unarisen concentration as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of concentration… once it has arisen? There are themes for calm, themes for non-distraction [these are the four establishings of mindfulness]. To foster appropriate attention to them: This is the food for the arising of unarisen concentration as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of concentration… once it has arisen.

“And what is the food for the arising of unarisen equanimity as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of equanimity… once it has arisen? There are mental qualities that act as a foothold for equanimity as a factor for awakening. To foster appropriate attention to them: This is the food for the arising of unarisen equanimity as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of equanimity… once it has arisen.” — SN 46:51

19. “‘This noble truth of stress is to be comprehended’ … ‘This noble truth of the origination of stress is to be abandoned’ … ‘This noble truth of the cessation of stress is to be realized’ … ‘This noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress is to be developed.’” —SN 56:11

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: MN 117; MN 118; MN 119; MN 125; SN 12:66; SN 47:8; SN 47:20; SN 47:40; AN 4:194; AN 4:245; AN 7:63; AN 8:70; AN 10:51